THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNALAFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. India has ratified the 1994 Convention on Nuclear Safety. The Instrument of Ratification was submitted on March 31, 2005 to the Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency, who is the Depository of the Convention. India shares the objective of the Convention of maintaining a high level of nuclear safety worldwide through the enhancement of national measures and international cooperation, including in safety-related technical cooperation. This incentive Convention has been ratified by all countries producing nuclear power.

(d) and (e) In the Memoradum of Understanding signed in 1999 by the Foregin Secretaries of India and Pakistan, the two sides *inter alia* undertook "to notify each other immediately in the event of any accidental, unauthorized or unexplained incident that could create the risk of a fallout with adverse consequences for both sides, or an outbreak of a nuclear war between the two countries, as well as to adopt measures aimed at diminising the possibility of such actions, or such incidents being misinterpreted by the other." During the visit of External Affairs Minister Shri Natwar Singh to Pakistan in February 2005, the two sides agreed to initiate discussions on an agreement on the same.

Ties with Pak and Nepal

3772. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNALAFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have initiated a drive to strengthen the ties with the neighbouring countries especially Pakistan and Nepal;

(b) if so, the measures taken so far towards this objective; and

(c) the details of achievements made my Government in this direction"

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNALAFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) **Pakistan**

Singificant development have taken place in India-Pakistan relations since April 2003. Relations have been resotred at the level of High Commissioners; transport and communication links have resumed; one round of Composite Dialogue has been completed; a series of technical level and Composite Dialogue related meetings have been held on schedule. Another round has been initiated with the Foreign Secretary level talks in December 2004.

People to people exchange are taking place across the supectrum in large numbers. There has been a resumption of visits by pilgrim groups. Our High Commission is issuing close to 10,000 visas per month.

The bilateral process has been given impetus through maintenance of high level contacts. The meeting between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf in New York in September 2004 was followed by the visit of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to New Delhi on November 23-24, 2004. February 2005 saw a bilateral visit by an Indian EAM to Pakistan after a gap of almost 16 years. President Musharraf visited India from April 16-18, 2005; the visit took bilateral relations forward in a significant way.

The Srinagar Muzaffrabad bus has already been operationalized from April 7, 2005; agreements have been reached to start bus services between Lahore and Amritsar, including to religious places such as Nankana Sahib. Pakistan also agreed for restroration of the Khokrapar-Munnabao rail till January 1, 2006 .

The ceasefire being observed along the International Border, the LOC, and the AGPL in Siachen, with the exception of two incidents, has held for more than a year.

India has agreed to discuss the proposal of a pipeline through Pakistan, subject to satisfaction of our concerns on security and adequate supplies. Agreements would be concluded in the coming months on Pre-notification of Missile Tests , and between Coast Guards and Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency, as well as between the narcotics control authorities of the two countries. Discussions would begin on Agreements on Preventing Incidents at Sea, and Reducing the Risk of Nuclear Accident or Unauthroised use of Nuclear Weapons.

Progress has been made in meetings on conventional and nuclear CBMs, and a Joint Survey of the boundary pillars in the International Boundary in the Sir Creek has also been successfully concluded in January 2005.

Significant progress has been achieved on the humanitarian issue of fishermen and civilian detainess. During the Foreign Secretary level talks in December 2004, it was *inter-alia* agreed that:

- Immediate notification would be provided to the respective High Commissions through the Foreign Ministries of arrested Pakistani/Indian nationals;

- Consular access would be provided within three months of apprehension;
- Repatriation would be done immediately after completion of sentence and nationality verification;
- A mechanism would be introduced for early repartiation, without sentencing of inadvertent crossers;
- A similar mechanissm would be established for early release, without sentencing of those under 16 apprehended by either side.

Since then, Pakistan, has released 266 Indian fishermen in January 2005 it has released additional 528 Indian fishermen and 36 civilian prisoners in March 2005. India has provided consular access to 113 civilian prisoners in 2005 and 22 civilian prisoners are currently being released in April 2005. We have released 156 out of 194 Pakistani fishermen in our custody on April 19, 2005.

Thus meaningful progress has been achieved in the process of normalization of India-Pakistan relations. Government are committed to continuing the present process of building confidence, enhancing cooperation and dialogue in an atmoshpere free from terrorism and violence, and to discuss any outstanding bilateral issue with Pakistan, including Jammu and Kashmir.

Nepal

India attaches high priority to its relations with Nepal. As a neighbour and close friend we continue to support all efforts in Nepal in restoration of peace and stability in the country. India has consistently held the view that the problems confronting Nepal including the Maoist insurgency can be addressed effectively only or the basis of a national consensus between the two constitutional forces, namely multi-party democracy and constitutional monarcy.

Considerable progress has been made in our cooperation with Nepal in the area of border security and management. New mechnisms have been established to strengthen cross-border coordination and exchange of information. Tests of a new Extradition Treaty and an Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters have been finalized. Several infrastructure projects for development of border infrastructure have been launched. These projects would facilitate bilateral economic cooperation and also contribute towards strengthening security in border areas.